

May 20 / Administration of George Bush, 1991

the following persons were referred to: Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher of Germany; Secretary of State James A. Baker III; President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Gen. Mikhail Moiseyev, Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Union; and President Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani of Iran.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With President Luis Alberto Lacalle of Uruguay May 21, 1991

Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi

Q. Mr. President, what do you say about the Prime Minister—ex-Prime Minister Gandhi?

President Bush. I was just talking to President Lacalle, and he and I agree that this is a real tragedy. Barbara and I have had a friendship, a real friendship, with Rajiv Gandhi and his wife, and it's on a personal basis I mourn the loss. But when you look at his contribution to international order and when you think of his decency, it's a tragedy. And that people resort in a democratic country or anywhere to violence of this nature—it's just appalling. And I don't know what the world's coming to, but it's a sad thing for this young man to have lost his life in this way. It's a tragedy.

I expect you agree.

President Lacalle. Of course, I do. It's a tough job sometimes being in politics.

President Bush. That's right.

Q. You sound kind of discouraged about what the world's coming to.

President Bush. Well, I'm discouraged about that. This is a man to whom I've felt very, very close. And I felt that I knew him right well. I remember being received by his mother and him while she was still in power and not very long after that she was brought down by assassins' guns. It's just a tragedy, so I am discouraged about that. I'm not discouraged about the world, but I'm discouraged about that, I'll tell you.

Thank you all very much.

[At this point, members of the Uruguayan press corps entered the room.]

Visit of President Lacalle

President Bush. May I just say what a pleasure it is to have the President here. There's no way we can thank him on a visit of this nature for the hospitality that he and his wife and family extended to me and to my daughter down there. But it's a joy seeing this President. We've got a lot in common and we've got a lot at stake in seeing what he stands for succeed—not just in his country, but that enterprise spirit succeed across the southern cone and Southern Hemisphere. And I'm optimistic about it, but I'm anxious to talk to your President.

Do you want a word?

President Lacalle. No.

President Bush. Okay. They see you all the time.

Q. Mr. President, fishing is waiting for you in Punta del Este.

President Bush. Quando?

Q. You have to choose.

President Bush. Don't tempt me, I'll be down there.

Thank you guys. Good to see you all. Welcome.

Note: The exchange began at 3:02 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, President Bush referred to Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India; Sonia Gandhi, his wife; and Indira Gandhi, his mother and also former Indian Prime Minister.